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ABSTRACT

The professionalism of society, the higher education of British elites, and the control of British higher education are addressed in the three papers comprising this report. The rise of a professional society, defined as a society increasingly based on technical or bureaucratic knowledge, and on trained expertise and certification by paper qualifications is discussed in relation to the increasing size and importance of the higher education system. This is followed by an explanation of how the higher education of the major elites in British society since 1880 illustrates both the rise of a professional society and the adaptation to it of the old dominant upper class. Finally, a discussion of the control of British higher education is presented that centers on the parties contending for control: (1) the academics; (2) the university bureaucrats; (3) the students; (4) the potential employers; (5) the lay founders and benefactors of the universities and their successors; (6) the voting taxpayer; (7) the local authorities; (8) the politicians; and (9) the civil servants. (SPG)

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BRITISH SOCIETY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Harold Perkin

YALE HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH GROUP

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BRITISH SOCIETY AND HIGHER EDUCATION:

THREE LECTURES

by Harold Perkin

I

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY

All societies get the education, and especially the higher education they deserve. That is a truism which covers a wealth of subtlety and differentiation. It is not merely that in a crudely determinist sense - equally acceptable to the "speculative historians" of those pioneer social scientists of the Scottish historical school of philosophers, Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart and John Millar who first invented the evolutionary interpretation of history, to Comte and the Positivists who expressed it in more philosophical language, to Marx and Engels who raised it to a powerful instrument of revolution, to Walt Rostow, Arthur Lewis and the overoptimistic development economists of the 1950s, and to Daniel Bell and the protagonists of "post-industrial society" in the 1970s[1] - each society gets the education most appropriate to its stage of technological progress and, either causing it or stemming from it, its dominant ideology. The all-too-familiar - and all-too-misleading - evolution from pre-industrial or feudal society through industrial or capitalist to post-industrial or managerial/bureaucratic/service-oriented society does indeed demand different kinds of education and increasing amounts of higher education. But the notion that the education systems at

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[1] For a select bibliography of the Scottish historical school of philosophy see R.L. Meek, "The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology" in J. Saville, ed., Democracy and the Labour Movement, London, 1954; amongst modern development economists the most important are W.W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth, Cambridge, England, 1960, W.A. Lewis, The Theory of Economic Growth, London, 1955, and C.P. Kindleberger, Economic Development, New York, 1958; for "post-industrial", "post-capitalist", "post-modern" and other "posterior" societies, see Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, Penguin Edition, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1973, pp. 51-54.

each stage of the ideological/technological evolution are basically the same in all societies is as naïve as the belief underlying all such historicist theories that the societies themselves are fundamentally alike at each stage: i.e. that pre-industrial societies are more like each other than like any industrial society; that industrial societies in turn go through much the same processes of change and become increasingly similar in social values and economic structure; and that post-industrial societies are the most convergent of all. Such theories, incidentally, tend to appear in those societies which currently consider themselves to be in the vanguard of evolutionary progress: Britain, France and Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries, the United States and Russia in the 20th: their different versions of inevitable convergence, in each of the five cases, all seem to mean that "Everyone else will sooner or later become like us".

Now, it is more than obvious that every society has to have an education system necessary to its continuance and survival, or it will soon become extinct, absorbed by some more powerful neighbour or transmogrified into a new kind of society with a more appropriate education system. To that extent it must at the very least make arrangements for passing on from one generation to the next, and hopefully improving, its means of procuring a living and distributing that living, usually very unequally, between its members; almost always in the past between a small ruling group of exploiters and a large mass of the exploited producers. But those means may be, and most commonly have in the past been, largely informal, and the formal education systems which modern educationists normally take for their province have often been the least relevant to the technological substructure of the societies concerned. This has been especially true of formal systems of higher

education: the Athenian lyceums for slave-owning, leisured democrats, the Chinese mandarin schools for imperial bureaucrats, the medieval European universities for churchmen, theologians and royal or baronial scribes, 18th-century Oxford and Cambridge for leisured gentlemen and indolent clerics, the 19th-century German universities for pure research scholars seeking truth, the social prestige of a vocationally irrelevant degree and, paradoxically, a post in the Prussian bureaucracy. While all these fine gentlemen were enjoying their intellectual athletics or at best learning how to rule and better exploit their social inferiors, their inferiors were getting on with the real work of education, learning on the job by apprenticeship, formal or informal, to be agriculturists, craftsmen, even bankers, merchants, surgeons, apothecaries, lawyers, surveyors, architects, teachers and most of the other producers and purveyors of services on which society depended.[2]

The informal processes of education, not merely those of learning a trade or vocation on the job but of learning one's place in society and its rights, responsibilities and duties, have always been far more important than the formal, which is why so much history of education, devoted as it is to formal structures, is so irrelevant to the real understanding of past societies and to the processes by which they persisted or transformed themselves. All formal education, indeed, must begin in an informal way, with a perceived need which can no longer be met by an ad hoc response institutionalizing itself in permanent, formal arrangements. Thus the idle young Athenians, listening while oiling themselves between

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[2] Cf. Robert Campbell, The London Tradesman, London, 1747, which covers all the "learned" professions as well as merchants, bankers and the manual crafts.

bouts of physical athletics to peripatetic philosophers or "thinkers aloud" like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, grew by degrees into the world-famous schools of Athens; the universities of the European middle ages similarly grew out of the informal lectures given outside the great cathedrals by Peter Abelard, Duns Scotus and other wandering scholars; and the mechanics' institutes and technical schools of the British industrial revolution grew out of informal lectures on chemistry and other useful sciences to young factory managers and foremen by such men as Thomas Henry and the Rev. Thomas Barnes who then founded a College of Arts and Sciences in Manchester in 1783.[3] Formal education emerges to meet those needs which are most strongly felt by a society at a particular time, but for that very reason it reveals the true concerns and values of that particular society and not necessarily those which the modern protagonists of historicist evolutionary schemes of social development think it ought to have.

For example, if all pre-industrial societies and their educational systems had been fundamentally alike it is highly doubtful if industrialism would ever have occurred. Even today, pre-industrial societies come in many different shapes and sizes, from the tribal and primitive societies of Africa or Polynesia which lack the basic craft and social skills necessary for even an approach to industrialism, to the ancient, sophisticated civilizations of Asia and the Middle East which display higher craft and social skills than any in the pre-industrial West but often for religious or cultural reasons lack the materialist ambition which motivated the industrializing West. In the pre-industrial West it was only because one society was a maverick, and differed in fundamental ways from the rest, that the industrial

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[3] Cf. A.E. Musson, "Science and Industry in the 18th Century", Economic History Review, n.s. XIII, 1960, p.224, and N.A. Hans, New Trends in 18th-Century Education, London, 1951.

revolution began there, and perhaps began at all.

As I have shown elsewhere,[4] it was because Britain had a different social structure from the still largely feudal aristocracies of continental Europe that she could mount the first and only spontaneous industrial revolution. Where they still had feudal lords dependent on feudal dues or labour services, she had real landowners who stood to gain in increased rent from every kind of economic improvement, in agriculture, mining, transport or town building. Where they still had a base population of peasants, with little or no incentive to leave the land for urban industry and little or no purchasing power for mass consumer goods, she had a highly developed proletariat of wage-earning domestic workers, avid for increased income and consumption. Where they had a small and frustrated "bourgeoisie" subservient to but jealous of the nobility, she had a large thriving middle class, partly recruited from the younger sons of the landed class, and welcome to join that class if only they could make enough money to buy an estate. Social emulation, the desire to "keep up with the Joneses", permeated the whole of society, stimulating demand for fashionable consumer goods, and so powered the engine of mass consumption which drove the industrial revolution.

All this was done with the least possible benefit of formal education, and without any major change in the higher education system, at least until the main phase of industrialization was complete. The British working class were more literate than most Europeans but, apart from the Scots who had had a state-supported village school system since 1694, they were so because of a hotch-potch of charitable, mainly Church and sectarian schools, which

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4 "The Social Causes of the British Industrial Revolution", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th s., XVIII, 1968, and The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880, London, 1969, chap. 3.

were not even subsidized by the state until 1833, and not fully state-supported or provided until 1870. Many attempts were made to provide technical education for skilled workers and foremen, beginning with the short-lived Manchester College of Arts and Sciences in 1783 and continuing with the mechanics' institutes of the 1820s and encouraged by small government grants by the Science and Art Department set up after the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the so-called "whiskey money" of 1889,[5] but it all amounted to very little before the 20th century, and the main form of training of British engineers and other technicians was always on the job (and, with the help of part-time education at evening classes, continues to be so).

Meanwhile, although the so-called public (strictly, private) boarding schools for the wealthy, and the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge were reformed to meet the needs of the new society, they were far more concerned with turning the sons of the new industrialists into Christian gentlemen, efficient civil servants and colonial rulers, active and even muscular clergymen, and reliable doctors, barristers and other professionals - anything, that is, except industrialists and business men. Even the new civic universities, founded as private colleges by business men in the great industrial cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Birmingham and so on between 1851 and 1900,[6] were, as David Jones has shown,[7]

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5 Amongst the many social histories of English education in the nineteenth century the best include John Hurt, Education in Evolution, 1800-1870, London, 1971, Brian Simon, Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870 and Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920, London, 1960 and 1965, and Mary Sturt, The Education of the People, London, 1967.

6 Cf. W.H.G. Armytage, Civic Universities, London, 1955.

7 David R. Jones, "The Beginning of Civic Universities", Yale Higher Education Program Working Paper 13, December 1976.

more the product of civic pride and responsibility and the demand for the expansion of the professions than of a demand for educated business men and scientific managers; they remained small as compared with Oxford and Cambridge and were more concerned with certification for the professions, notably medicine and teaching, than with training for industry.

Although towards the end of the century the universities, starting with Cambridge and the Scottish universities, began to take a greater interest in natural science and technology, the numbers of graduates even in those subjects actually entering industry remained in the minority. Of 176 Cambridge engineering graduates surveyed in 1910, for example, only 59 went into manufacturing industry; the rest mostly became consulting engineers, teachers or government, municipal or railway engineers.[8] The great majority of industrial owners and managers in the first workshop of the world had no higher education whatever. The universities existed to serve the elite of that society - less than 1% of the age group in 1900 - and the elite included the landed gentry, the politicians, the Anglican clergy and the mainly non-scientific professions, and certainly not the capitalists who, curiously enough, were content to provide the endowments for the universities which turned their sons and others away from the sordid pursuit of production and towards the more noble and public-spirited professions of governing and servicing a great empire.[9]

Other industrializing societies could not afford to take so high-minded and anti-industrialist a line, and were forced to compromise. The French with their Polytechnique and other grandes écoles from 1794 and the

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8 Sheldon Rothblatt, The Revolution of the Dons, London, 1968, p.285.

9 Cf. Ibid., pp. 256-73.

Germans with their technisches hochschülen from the Berlin Technical Institute of 1821 were obliged to provide what the British could take for granted; technical training could not be provided on the job before the jobs existed, and to catch up with and try to overtake the British with their head-start of half a century required a deliberate provision by the state of formal technical education. It paid off handsomely, and the polytechnics and technical high schools produced the graduates who were to transform Belgian, French and still more German industry and to create new industries, such as fine chemicals and electrical and motor engineering, ahead of the British. But though the state bureaucracy tightly controlled the technical institutions, they did not themselves engage in them. The French bureaucracy, more meritocratic in their Revolutionary and Napoleonic tradition, did to some extent send their children to the grandes écoles, but the Germans, where not themselves Junkers, were permeated with the Junker ideology, and looked to the Humboldtian ideal of the professorial university, pursuing pure knowledge, above all Hegelian political philosophy, for its own sake, which fitted their students to follow their fathers into the prestigious positions of the social and political elites. The German model of a university spread throughout Europe. As Roger Geiger has shown, in pre-World War I Europe, if secondary school teachers are included, the majority of university graduates ended up on government payrolls.[10] In the capitalist industrial Europe of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the universities, as the most prestigious sector of the higher education system, were both the preserve and the producer of the aristocratic-dominated bureaucracy.

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10. Roger Geiger, "European Universities - the Unfinished Revolution", Yale Higher Education Program Working Paper 11, September 1976, p.3.

The Japanese, whose pre-industrial society was unique in being at once socially backward in its primitive form of rice-based feudalism and economically advanced in its prosperous commerce, superb craft skills and higher degree of urbanization than any country in the West save Britain, took over compulsory education and the university amongst other carefully selected borrowings from the Western barbarians (including British technology, French investment banking and a Germanic constitution) in order to beat them at their own game. But although they created the largest, most open and competitive system of private universities outside the United States, they ensured that the sons of the leading ex-samurai families found their way to the dozen or so prestigious universities from which alone the government and the immensely powerful zaibatsu (money-trusts) recruited their lifelong bureaucrats. Although the Japanese are the only example of a military aristocracy transforming themselves into an industrial bureaucracy, their use of the universities still followed the traditional pattern of serving the needs of an established elite.

Only in the United States, "born free" industrially as an offshoot of the British industrial revolution, and with its commitment to the free market in education as in business, did the capitalist ideology fully operate within the higher education system. And here it was more by accident than by design, and for three reasons: 1) there was no traditional aristocracy to dominate and control the universities; 2) the system of control by boards of trustees, originally designed for sectarian colleges by colonial churches, was readily adaptable to control by boards of local business men and benefactors, and in the state universities by local politicians usually derived from the same business class; and 3) the free market gave the ultimate power to the consumer, the individual student, who could demand whatever service and whatever subject he thought would best serve his career,

and "vote with his feet" if he did not get it. Thus the American university system was the only truly capitalist one in ideology, control by business men, and the operation of the free market. Yet, as Burton Clark has pointed out, "From this comparative perspective, the American system of higher education emerges a deviant case, falling far from the modes of organization prevalent in most developed as well as developing societies".[11] The deviance, I suggest, lies not merely in the historical evolution of American colleges but in the deviant organization and values of American society.

What I have tried to show so far is that pre-industrial and industrial societies differ from each other in very specific ways which cause them to industrialize for different reasons and with different results, in the shape of different ideologies and value systems stemming from the survival, adaptation or destruction and replacement of different sorts of pre-industrial elites. Here I come very close to Barrington Moore, Jr., with his pre-industrial origins of industrial and post-industrial dictatorship and democracy; but I would also go beyond him, with Alexander Gerschenkron, in attributing just as much importance to the process by which a society industrializes, the motivation of the protagonists, whether individual profit or military power, and the degree of heavy-handed intervention by the state required to move the society in the required direction.[12] Either

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[11] Burton R. Clark, "The Benefits of Disorder", Change magazine, October, 1976; see also his "The Structure of Academic Governance in the United States", Yale Higher Education Program Working Paper 8, July 1976.

[12] Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Penguin ed., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1967. Alexander Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

way, the system of education serves all the ends of the particular society, whether basic literacy for industrial process workers and/or military conscripts, technical education for skilled workers and managers and/or mechanized armies and their military experts, or higher education for the dominant elite, whether a German or Russian military aristocracy, a Napoleonic meritocratic bureaucracy, an adaptive, commercially and politically opportunist British gentry, a Japanese samurai estate self-transformed into state and corporation entrepreneurs, or a Social Darwinist American oligarchic democracy of successful capitalists. Everywhere in the industrial societies until the First World War, almost everywhere until after the Second, the education system served the industrial (which except in Soviet Russia meant the capitalist) system, certainly; but the higher education system, which nearly everywhere meant the universities, was elitist, in the pure and simple sense that it served the dominant elite, which was not always and everywhere a purely capitalist ruling class.

I am not saying that the industrial societies created by the industrial revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries were not capitalist, in the basic, indeed strictly Marxist, sense that they were based on the exploitation of wage labour (as opposed to peasant or serf exploitation) and that their social structures increasingly displayed a polarization between the two major classes of employers and workers. But these were never the only classes, even in the most capitalist-dominated societies. Down to the First World War in Europe, and beyond that in many societies, including Britain and Japan, an old landed ruling class still dominated the institutions of the state and, amongst other organs of social control and reproduction, the system of higher education.

There was also another class, noticed by Marx in his famous unfinished

last chapter of Capital, but rejected by him as too disturbing to his theory: "physicians and officials", fee takers and salary earners[13] - in other words the non-capitalist or professional middle class. This class, to which most of the great social thinkers of the 19th century, from Malthus, Coleridge, Carlyle and the two Mills to Marx himself, the Fabians, Weber and Durkheim, belonged, played the leading role in formulating the terminology in which contemporaries thought about their societies and therefore, since social structure is largely a construct in the collective mind, in the very meaning and structure of societ itself. Since most of their formulations were tripartite, embracing a landed aristocracy, a capitalist bourgeoisie and an industrial proletariat, they left themselves out of their pictures of society. For this reason I have referred to them elsewhere as "the forgotten middle class".[14] But that was in relation to the 19th century, when they were still few and could perform their task of thinking for, hectoring and lecturing society and licking it into shapes which they had preconceived. In the 20th century they have become immensely more numerous, and have begun to vie with and even outnumber the industrial proletariat as the largest class in the most advanced societies - in the United States according to Daniel Bell no less than 54% of the occupied population is engaged in "computication" or information functions, and over 60% in all the service industries from medicine to engineering.[15]

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13 K. Marx, Capital, Chicago, 1909, vol. 3, chap. 42, pp. 1031-2.

14 Origins of Modern English Society, chap. 7, section 4.

15 D. Bell, interviewed by the London Times Higher Education Supplement, 11 March 1977; cf. his Post-Industrial Society, p.135, where he gives somewhat lower figures, 47% in 1968 and 51% projected for 1980, for white-collar occupations.

In Western Europe in 1969 it was between 40% and 50%. Beyond that, manufacturing industry itself, whether still owned by old-fashioned family capitalists like Ford, Rockefeller and Du Pont, by numerous small stockholders or by corporate investors like banks and insurance companies, or partly by the state in mixed economies of Western Europe or wholly by it as in the Soviet bloc, is increasingly run by professional managers, selected for their expertise and competence rather than their acquired or inherited ownership of the stock. In this narrow sense - a much wider one will be offered later - we can call the development of modern industrial or post-industrial, service-oriented rather than manufacturing society, the rise of professional society.

All this is familiar ground to readers of Berle and Means on the giant corporations, of Burnham on managerialism, Michael Young on the meritocracy, Wright Mills on the power elite and, latest of the line, Daniel Bell on post-industrial society. It has been vigorously opposed, naturally, by Marxists such as John Rex, Tom Bottomore and Nicos Poulantzas, who hold that a small ruling class of capitalists still own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange, and merely employ the professional men, from state bureaucrats to professional management, as a well-rewarded, perhaps co-exploiting, but nevertheless dependent intellectual proletariat.[16]

In my opinion both sides miss the point. All societies, at least above the most primitive tribal level, contain elements of both class and interest grouping, both related in different ways to the means of production, distribution and exchange. Class is the familiar horizontal grouping of

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16 John Rex, "Capitalism, elites and the ruling class", in P. Stanworth and A. Giddens, eds., Elites and Power in British Society, Cambridge, England 1974; T.B. Bottomore, Elites and Society, Penguin ed., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964; N. Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State", in J. Urry and J. Wakeford, eds., Power in Britain, London, 1973, and Pouvoir Politique et Classes Sociales, Paris, 1968.

men with the same occupational source of income: rent, profits, wages (and, to complete the picture, professional fees or salaries). Interest is the less familiar but in pre-industrial society dominant vertical grouping of men with the same source of income looked at from a functional point of view: the landed interest, the mercantile interest, the manufacturing interest (where, for example, the master manufacturer and the working manufacturer have the same interest over against, say, the importers of competing products or the exploiters of food shortages). Both class and interest lead to social conflict, but of different sorts. The test is the answer to the question men always ask when faced with an economic crisis: "Who is to blame?" Where interest predominates, as in pre-industrial society, the answer is, another interest group: the bakers, millers and farmers who profiteer in bread, for example. Where class predominates, as in industrial society, the answer is, the landlords who pass corn laws, the employers who pay low wages, or the workers who demand too much for too little work. But both interest and class are always present, like the warp and the weft in the cloth. Which thread shows most on the surface depends on the weave: early in industrial revolutions, both may show in confusing alternation, like shot silk: aristocratic state intervention alongside capitalist laissez-faire, machine breaking (against a new competing interest) alongside trade union bargaining.

It was just such a transition from an interest society in which class was latent (with food and machine breaking riots but also with embryonic trade unions) to a class society (with struggles over the Corn Laws, trade unionism and the working class vote but also with paternalistic Factory and Mines Acts) which I described in The Origins of Modern English Society.[17] And it was just such a hangover from aristocratic, interest-based

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[17] See esp. chaps. 6, "The Birth of Class" and 7, "The Struggle between the Ideals".

societies in which the emphasis was still on the paternalistic duty of an old landed elite to prepare themselves to govern great empires on behalf of and in the name of the people which accounts for the use to which most European universities were put - the education of a traditional elite - down to the First World War.

But this was never their only use. There were always certain services which the elite needed as props and supports which could best be supplied, in their highest forms at least, by the universities: salvation and moral control by an educated clergy, medicine by high-grade physicians (rather than apprenticed surgeons and apothecaries), law for future advocates and judges (rather than mere attorneys) and, increasingly as time went on, trained administrators for the state. Indeed, the medieval European universities were founded for just these professional purposes, and were only later infiltrated and dominated by the sons of the elite. Yet the professionals remained as a sort of aboriginal cuckoo in the nest, who when the time was ripe would grow to bursting point, push out the other nestlings, and take over the nest.

Before the time was ripe, in the industrial societies of the 19th century in which one would have expected the rising capitalist class to take over the universities, it was the professionals in the shape of practising university teachers, rather than the aristocratic elite themselves, who prevented the capitalist take-over and instead, as in Oxford and Cambridge, transformed the sons of the newly-rich business class into business-despising civil servants, empire-builders, colonial rulers, lawyers, doctors, professional men of all kinds and, above all, university dons who would teach the next generation to despise business and serve God, king and country rather than Mammon. Only about 7% of all Cambridge graduates during the

19th century entered business, or less than half the percentage coming from business families.[18] That they were so much more successful in England (not Scotland) than elsewhere, and that there was no alternative system of technical education of sufficient prestige, as in Europe, goes far to explain the deceleration of technological progress in Britain in the later 19th century when other countries began to pioneer more science-based industries.

Nevertheless, even in the 19th century, British universities, and still more those of Europe and North America, began to cater for a whole new range of professions created by industrialism: the new University of London (1826) besides the old philosophy, theology, medicine and jurisprudence, taught chemistry, physics, mineralogy, engineering, design, education, political economy and modern languages. Other civic colleges and universities from Durham (1833) to Birmingham (1900) followed suit; and so, after their compulsory reform by Acts of Parliament in the 1850s and 1870s, did Oxford and especially Cambridge, with science and engineering schools and laboratories which attracted famous scientists like Clerk Maxwell, Lord Rayleigh, Sir Joseph Thompson and Lord Rutherford. Most of the new professions, it is true, from civil and mechanical engineering to surveying and accountancy, grew up outside the universities, and were forced to provide their own training, examination and, most important, certification through their own institutes. But the time would not be long before they either accepted university degrees as automatic qualifications for membership or approached the universities to provide the training and certification for them.

The time became ripe for the professional take-over during the 20th century, and above all after the Second World War. T[illegible] percentage of the

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[18] Rothblatt, op. cit., p. 268

age group attending university in Britain grew from under 1% in 1900 to nearly 2% in 1939, 4% in 1962 (at the time of the Robbins Report) and about 7% today. (At the same time a great and largely new system of state-supplied higher education, full-time and part-time, in technical colleges, teachers' colleges, polytechnics and the like, developed, which brought the total percentage on advanced full-time courses to 15%).[19] The growth of numbers was entirely due to the pressure of student demand for certification in a world which demanded ever more specialization and ever more paper guarantees of specialized expertise. By 1964 there were about 160 qualifying or pseudo-qualifying associations in England and Wales.[20] The professions themselves forced their way into the universities. The Vice-Chancellor of London University in 1946 observed:

> The truth is that all the professions are pressing us, as universities, to take on a greater part, if not the whole, of the requisite professional or technical training for their own professional subjects.

And he went on to mention five professions, accountancy, veterinary medicine, estate management, youth leadership and journalism, which had recently approached his university.[21] By 1976 the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals was still talking about the increasing emphasis on degree studies as the main route to professional qualification.[22] By that time the universities no longer had a monopoly of the award of degrees but shared it, through the Central Council for Academic Awards, with the polytechnics

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19 Robbins Report on Higher Education, London (H.M.S.O., Cmnd. 2154), 1963, p.16; Department of Education and Science, Education: A Framework for Expansion, London (H.M.S.O., Cmnd. 5174), 1972, p.35.

20 Geoffrey Millerson, The Qualifying Associations, London, 1964, p. 215.

21 Home Universities Conference, 1946: Report of Proceedings, London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1946.

22 Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (of U.K. Universities), Report, 1972-76, London, 1976, p. 39.

and other colleges. But along with them they provided the bulk of the training for the immensely expanded numbers of professional men and women, from social workers to business managers, on whom society had come to depend. At the same time the competition for certification, intensified by the automatic system of maintenance grants for all students admitted (1960), had driven out the old elite of idle gentlemen who once attended the university for fun and cultivation - or, rather, as we shall see in the next lecture, transformed them into formidable competitors - and, if we accept the broader definition of professionalism as covering the whole non-capitalist middle class, had turned the universities and polytechnics into the main education instruments of the new professional society. Higher education, from being a peripheral agent of elitist socialization, had become the key profession which educated the proliferating professions of the new society.[23]

But what is the new professional society? It is a society in which an increasing percentage of men and women find their place chiefly by performing a specialized job which requires expertise and therefore training, education and certification. It stretches far beyond the traditional professions up to the bureaucratic elites of government and big business and down to lesser services and quasi-professions such as nursing, social work, office management, salesmanship, automobile damage assessment, hotel catering, public relations and even packaging.[24] In every field of service there is not merely a demand for greater specialization and a consequent proliferation of paper qualifications; there is an escalation of certification as employers (usually professional bureaucrats themselves) demand ever

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[23] Cf. H. Perkin, Key Profession: the History of the Association of University Teachers, London, 1969, esp. chap. 6, "The Academic Profession in a Professional Society".

[24] Cf. Millerson, op. cit., Appendix II, "Chronological List of Existing Qualifying and Non-Qualifying Associations in England and Wales", pp. 246-58.

higher qualifications for the same or lower-paid jobs. A typical example is university teaching itself which was once satisfied with a simple bachelor's or master's degree and now demands a doctorate or even post-doctoral research. Another is business management, which once spurned higher education as a waste of good training time, especially in Britain, but now increasingly demands good graduates and even postgraduate degrees in business studies.

Yet if this were all it would only add up to another version of Burnham's managerialism or Daniel Bell's "intellectual-technological" post-industrial society. Where I differ from them and other theorists of elitism, bureaucracy and technocracy is in three ways: 1) I see professionalism as affecting the whole society, including the manual working class; 2) I do not believe that all professional/post-industrial societies are necessarily or increasingly alike; and 3) nor do I believe that they are incompatible with a class or capitalist society.

First, I believe that the missing element in most managerial, meritocratic or post-industrial theories, which inevitably concentrate on the top end of society, is what I call the professionalization of the working class. By this I do not only mean the increasing tendency for skilled and even process workers to be specialized, trained and certificated, although that in itself is an important indicator. I refer to the increasing demand of the manual workers for traditional middle-class methods of remuneration and conditions of service: security of tenure, pension rights, holidays with pay (double pay in some American industries), the <u>same</u> hours, holidays, restroom, canteen and medical facilities as the professional managers and office workers, above all, a guaranteed year's wage, which is what but a salary? Both the Marxists and the anti-Marxists have written at length about the <u>embourgeoisement</u> of the workers, but without ever asking <u>which</u> bourgeoisie

the workers wish to emulate. It is certainly not the risk-bearing, profit-and-loss making capitalist bourgeoisie; it is the secure, protected, pensioned, salaried professional class.

Secondly, this process of professionalization of manual work seems to me to have gone much further in the more advanced post-industrial societies, notably America, Scandinavia, Germany and Japan, than in Britain, and it would be easy to assume that we are all moving in the same direction. Well, in a superficial sense we are: the richer the country the more it can afford both a wider range of service industries and more generous treatment of its workers. But at a deeper level old traits derived from the pre-industrial phase of society and the process by which it industrialized show through. The American workers prefer to bargain for their pensions and holidays with double pay through the free market (though the bargaining is obviously collective rather than individual). Most European ex-feudal societies, industrialized under a paternalist state-bureaucracy, prefer state legislation to enforce uniform workers' rights. Britain, always the pig-in-the-middle with its mixed economy and genius for compromise (or muddle), mixes paternalist welfare legislation with a trade union movement more dedicated to free market bargaining than any capitalist, often to obtain the worst of both worlds. The Japanese, true to their tradition of feudal paternalism and protection, provide for every need of the worker, from medical treatment to leisure pursuits through the quasi-feudal corporations. Thus in each country, post-industrial/professional society preserves the forms and ideologies of the pre-industrial and industrial past.

Finally, professional society in its various national forms is not incompatible with capitalism, or indeed with the traditional elite in any society. To return to our metaphor of the warp and the weft, it is a form - a more complex and variegated form - of interest grouping or vertical

bonding of society, and simply cuts across the bonds of class without disrupting them. Each profession or group of higher and lower professions - medicine from consultants through nurses to hospital porters, government from the high civil service down through the local officials in contact with the public, business management from corporation presidents to shop floor supervisors - is a hierarchy which spans all the classes just as did the old functional interests of Edmund Burke's England. The classes, or rather their sons and daughters, slot themselves into the rungs of each hierarchy according to their acquisition of the requisite training and certification.

Now, it is obvious that access to training and certification are just about as unequal as the distribution of capital and income. Merit counts for something and social climbing is part of the game of professionalism; but then so it did and was in the old capitalist society, where merit took the form not of passing examinations but of simply making money. It comes as no surprise, however, to find that the most meritorious, either in passing examinations or in making money, come more often from the upper reaches of the class system than from the lower. In short, the rich, influential and prestigious - quite properly, of course - use education and certification to place their children in the higher reaches of the professional hierarchies. They do not always succeed, because some of their children do not possess the talent, or they reject the system and drop out, or are simply, though rarely, overtaken by superlative merit from below. The difference from the old naked capitalist system, however, is just this: that the way to the top for all, rich or poor, well or ill-prepared, highly or lowly motivated, is through the same gateway of education and certification. Even the rich and influential must pass through the eye of the higher education needle.

How the old traditional elites work the new system to their advantage, to ensure that their own children still come out on top and occupy what Wright Mills calls the strategic command posts of society can best be seen from a case study of the process of recruitment in one country. My next lecture will be on the role of higher education in the recruitment of elites in British society.

II

THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF BRITISH ELITES

The rise of a professional society, of a society increasingly based on technical or bureaucratic knowledge, on trained expertise and certification by paper qualifications, has in Britain, as elsewhere in the post-industrial world, vastly increased the size and importance of the higher education system. In 1900 the universities catered for less than 1% of the appropriate age group in Great Britain, by 1938 for nearly 2%, by 1962 for about 4% and today for over 7%; meanwhile, the percentage of full-time students in both the university and state sectors of higher education has increased from over 1% of the age group in 1900 to nearly 3% in 1938, 8.5% in 1962 and 15% today.[25] To these figures, totalling about half a million in 1973, ought to be added the large numbers of part-time students on whom British industry and commerce have always depended for the majority of their middle managers, technicians and skilled manual and non-manual workers: in 1973 there were 140,000 part-time students in the conventional universities and state colleges, plus 42,000 studying at home by television, radio and correspondence courses for the Open University. Another million or more students were taking evening and part-time day courses in non-university colleges leading to vocational qualifications, from external degrees of London University to the craft and secretarial examination certificates of the City and Guilds of

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25 Robbins Report, p.16; Education: A Framework for Expansion, p.35.

London Institute and the Royal Society of Arts.[26]

Altogether, including private colleges, about 2 million people compared with an occupied population of about 25 million were taking courses leading to some kind of certification. (This excludes another 2 million or more taking non-vocational classes for pleasure). About 40% of the working population had paper qualifications of some kind, ranging from degrees to certified apprenticeships; in the younger age groups under 35 it was more than half.[27] Although Britain had smaller percentages of full-time students than most West European countries, we actually produced, because of our shorter degree courses, lower failure rates and larger numbers of part-time students, more graduates in proportion to population than the rest. This applied, according to an O.E.C.D. survey of 1970, particularly to scientists and engineers[28] - which explodes the myth that Britain's economic troubles are due to lower investment in higher education. If the test of a professional society is the increasing difficulty of getting any but the most unskilled or menial job without a paper qualification - and, by extension, the infiltration of traditional non-graduate occupations by graduates - then Britain is fast becoming a professional society.

Yet this is not the same as saying that it is becoming an egalitarian meritocracy. On the contrary, A.H. Halsey has shown that the great expansion of universities in the 20th century has scarcely altered the

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26 For a conspectus of British provision for higher, further and adult education, including current statistics, see H. Perkin, "Something for Everybody", introductory article to the British Council's Higher Education in the United Kingdom, 1976-78: A handbook for students from overseas and their advisers, London, 1976.

27 Central Statistical Office, Social Trends, No. 5, 1974, London (H.M.S.O.), 1974, table 130, p.160.

28 Development of Higher Education, 1950-67, Statistical Survey, Paris: O.E.C.D., 1970.

proportion of manual workers' children amongst university students: in 1928-47 it was 23%, in 1961 25%, and in 1973 it was 28% (when their fathers equalled about 60% of the occupied population) - but most if not all of the increase was amongst women students, and the percentage of manual workers' sons stagnated or even declined.[29] The absolute numbers of working-class students had of course increased, but so had the numbers of upper and middle-class students; and a middle or upper class boy at all three dates had over six times the chance of getting to university of a manual worker's son.[30] The latter perhaps had more chance of taking an advanced course in the public sector where in 1961 34% of the students came from the working class; or of taking a degree at a polytechnic, since the polytechnics were set up in the 1960s to tap the demand from the less privileged classes. But such figures as exist suggest that the working-class percentage in the new polytechnics was scarcely greater than in the universities: at East London and Kingston Polytechnics in 1971 the figures were 30% and 24% respectively.[31] The Open University with its open admissions policy boasts a majority of manual workers' children amongst its students, 52% in 1971; but these were rather elderly children already in established careers, and only 5.3% of them were themselves manual workers.[32] Their upward mobility was the cause not the result of their taking an Open University degree course.

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29 A.H. Halsey, "Higher Education", in A.H. Halsey, ed., Trends in British Society since 1900, London, 1972, and table 7.9, p.219; Universities Central Council for Admissions, Statistical Supplement to the Eleventh Report, 1972-73, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, table K4, p.19.

30 Robbins Report, Appendix One (H.M.S.O., Cmnd. 2154-I), p.54; A.H. Halsey in The Guardian (Manchester, England), 11 February 1975; for a slightly different comparison between students born in 1913-31 and 1932-47 see A.H. Halsey, Towards Meritocracy? The Case of Britain, Oxford, 1977.

31 J. Pratt and T. Burgess, Polytechnics: A Report, London, 1974, p.86.

32 Naomi E. McIntosh, "Open Admissions - An Open or Revolving Door?", University Quarterly, Spring 1975; N.E. McIntosh and A. Woodley, "The Open University and Second Chance Education", Paedagogica Europaea, IX, 1974; N.E. McIntosh and V. Morrison, "Student Demand, Progress and Withdrawal: the Open University's First Four Years", Higher Education Review, Autumn 1974, pp. 40, 45-7.

The Open University apart, the expansion of higher education and the rise of professional society in Britain has benefited the different social classes in almost exactly the same proportions; but this has meant, if anything, an increase in the absolute grip which the higher classes have on the system in general and on the more prestigious universities in particular.[33] At Oxford and Cambridge the percentage of working-class students is less than half the national average (c. 12% - 13%). In other words, the demand for training and certification has forced the higher classes to send more of their children to universities and other colleges in order to qualify for careers in the same classes as themselves. Whereas a generation or more ago it was quite normal for landowners' and business men's sons not to go to university but to proceed straight from school - usually a public (i.e. private boarding) school - into managing the estate or the business (and we saw in the first lecture why a business man might fear that a university education would divert his son's interests away from business and into the professions or government service), now it has become the norm for their sons to seek a degree, and increasingly a post-graduate degree in business studies, as a prerequisite to a career in business.

This illustrates in concrete terms how a class society based on the ownership of property may co-exist comfortably with a professional society of the post-industrial, technocratic, service-oriented variety. The propertied classes use - indeed, are forced to use - higher education to

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[33] Cf. H. Perkin, "Mass Higher Education and the Elitist Tradition: the English Experience", Western European Education, Washington, D.C., VIII, Spring-Summer 1976.

maintain themselves and still more their children in what they consider their rightful place in society. Of course, the struggle for admission to the more prestigious institutions and the better degree courses exposes them to competition from below, and some will be overtaken by those with superior talent from the lower social levels; but then in an open society like Britain they always were exposed to such competition, in the form of a superior talent for money-making, not merely during the industrial revolution but in pre-industrial society where, as I have shown elsewhere, there was a continuous upflow of new men into the landed aristocracy and a continuous downflow of younger sons into the middle ranks, which can be traced at least as far back as the 14th century.[34] Social mobility in both directions may now operate more obviously via the educational system than through the market place, but in neither place does it operate with equal stakes.

Nor does the rise and fall of a small minority materially alter the basic inequality of the social structure. Even if opportunity were perfectly equal, or positive discrimination were imposed in favour of the underprivileged, it would not necessarily make the social structure one jot more equal. Let us suppose that the upper class, who constitute about 3% of the occupied population, were wholly recruited in each generation from the manual working class, which constitutes about 60%. It would take 20 generations, say 500 years, for the whole working class to take its turn at the top; and meanwhile the social distribution of wealth, power and prestige might be just as unequal at the end as at the beginning.

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[34] Origins of Modern English Society, chap. 2, esp. pp. 56-62.

A professional society, almost by definition, deals in inequality: professional hierarchies are pyramids with sharply pointed tops, and climbing them presupposes not only unequal talent but also unequal access to training and certification - and, one may add, unequal chances of promotion which may be socially as well as intellectually determined. For this reason, a professional society may not only co-exist comfortably with a class structure, but also with any combination of class and traditional elite - which is why it is necessary to study each national variant of professional society empirically, to avoid spurious similarities and discover the unique reality underlying each. Each post-industrial society is a web made up of a professional warp and a class weft, and the particular pattern and texture depends not only on the weave but on the original spinning and subsequent history of each thread.

In the case of Britain the web bears all the marks of a longer industrial and pre-industrial history than any other post-industrial society, since feudalism disappeared centuries before anywhere else and the industrial revolution began there first, just about 200 years ago. Some of the threads, and above all that of the landed gentry, are very ancient and have survived because they have been more adaptable than landed aristocracies elsewhere, and knew when to bend and concede reform when others were too rigid and broke under the strain. At the same time, their very adaptability, which gave Britain a flying start into the industrial age, became in time a disadvantage for British society, since we had to change far less than other societies and therefore retained aristocratic and basically gentlemanly, leisured and anti-industrial values into an age when they became an embarrassing obstacle to further economic progress. It is not too fanciful to suggest that the aristocratic preference for leisure, good manners and cultivation which makes

life so pleasant in Britain over against her more pushing and efficient rivals has infected not only business management but the very workers themselves. As one American business consultant, Charles Wilson, expressed it some years ago, British managers and workers "prefer their leisure on the job". It makes for a more pleasant and less stressful life, but it does not make for record rates of economic growth.

Yet even in Britain things do not stand still, and one means both of identifying the precise nature of its professional society and of measuring and understanding the subtle processes of change is to study the recruitment, in the sense of the social origins and education, of the major professional elites. As it happens, I have recently completed for the Social Science Research Council a large computer study of elites in British society since 1880.[35] It is a study of some 3,300 individuals occupying about 4,500 key decision-making positions at the head of ten major elites, or 33 sub-groups if we include all the different professions, types of company chairmen, Cabinet ministers of different parties, and so on. It included the Cabinet ministers of all three governing parties, the heads of all the civil service departments, great landowners with over £50,000 rental per year in the 1870s and their successors, the chairmen (presidents) of the 200 largest public companies (corporations), the chairmen and deputy chairmen of the nationalized industries, the most important trade union leaders (presidents and general secretaries of the Trades Union Congress and the

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[35] The 30,000-word Report, together with 396 tables and six Appendices, was delivered to the S.S.R.C. on 28 February 1977. If accepted, it will be deposited in the British Library Lending Division at Boston Spa, Harrogate, West Yorkshire, and will be available to academic borrowers. This technical Report will eventually be supplemented by a fuller book.

eight largest trade unions which embraced nearly half the trade union members in Britain), the presidents of the seven leading professional institutions (accountants, architects, civil and mechanical engineers, the Law Society, and the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons), senior judges, vice-chancellors of universities, headmasters of the top nine public (i.e. private boarding) schools (the so-called Clarendon schools), the editors of the main national newspapers and opinion-forming journals, governors of the B.B.C. and members of the Independent Television (now Broadcasting) Authority and, to include those who achieved greatness by less formal routes, newly-created peers and millionaires. For lack of time and money bishops, generals, admirals and R.A.F. officers of air rank - who have been studied by other social surveyors - were left out, as also were stars of the entertainment and sporting worlds, who could only have been sampled, and the aim was to include all the occupants of each defined elite group. Nevertheless, it was the largest comparative survey ever made of British elites, and certainly the only one on a uniform basis of comparison. It also covered a longer period, the 90 years from 1880 to 1970, in five cohorts: 1880-99, 1900-19, 1920-39, 1940-59, and 1960-70.

Three main indicators of social origin were utilized: education, secondary and higher; father's social class as determined principally by occupation; and an element we called economic worth. This last is the missing variable in all previous elite studies, since the British are particularly coy about their wealth, at least while they are alive, and the Inland Revenue records of individuals incomes are closed for 150 years. Recourse was therefore made to the only publicly accessible information on the wealth of individuals and their families, the probate valuations of estates left at death. There are technical difficulties in the use of these returns, notably

the changing treatment of land and settled property, the possible increase in recent years of tax avoidance, and the changing value of money, but these are not insuperable. Land can be allowed for by a judicious use of the Returns of Owners of Land, 1873-76. Tax avoidance has not been so great as has been claimed, since it comes up against what may be called the "King Lear syndrome", the fear that if you give your money away five or seven years before your death (if you are clever enough to calculate that) you give up the power and influence that goes with it. Certainly, enough has remained to indicate a wealthy family origin. In 1911-13 the top 10% of the deceased left 92% of the personal wealth, in 1960 83% and in 1973 (on a slightly different basis) 67%. Inflation, which will soon make millionaires of us all, was allowed for by building into the computer two indexes, one of retail prices and - since what the rich chiefly buy is not merely more goods and services but other people's labour - one of national income per head. These calculations enable us to see not merely from which social classes, schools and universities the elites were chiefly recruited but also the precise levels of wealth of the families from which they were derived. However, the statistics of economic worth are extremely complex, and though they reinforce all the other trends, it will be simpler to leave them out of this discourse.

It was also necessary to refine the scales of social class and education. The usual socio-economic scales derive ultimately from the Registrar-General's analysis of the 1951 Census, with an upper class (about 3%), a middle class (about 19%), skilled manual and routine non-manual class (about 51%, but usually subdivided into about 16% non-manual and 35% skilled manual), a semi-skilled manual (about 15%) and an unskilled manual class (about 12%). The top two classes, from which the majority of elite individuals were

recruited, were further divided into landowners or farmers, larger and smaller business men, and higher and lower professionals, thus arriving at a more realistic ten-point scale. Secondary education, which is usually divided into public (i.e. private boarding) school versus state, was further analysed by 59 separately named independent schools, as well as other private, direct grant (private grammar schools and subsidized until last year by the central government in return for a proportion of competitive scholarship places), and state grammar, technical, secondary modern and elementary (the state comprehensive came too late to educate any of the top people in the study). This made it possible to distinguish between Eton and Harrow (which two schools alone have dominated some British elites, including Conservative cabinets, great landowners and bank chairmen), other major public and minor public schools, the meritocratic direct grant schools, and the state schools which educated over 90% of the population. Similarly, distinctions were drawn between the more prestigious universities, Oxford, Cambridge and London, and other English and Welsh, Scottish and Irish universities, non-university colleges, professional education via the qualifying institutes, and foreign higher education. This made it possible to show the overwhelming importance of the ancient universities, notably Oxford and Cambridge, in the higher education of most of the British elites.

The benefit of setting the higher education of British elites since 1880 in this broader context of social class, secondary education and family wealth is that one can not merely follow the changes in the role of graduates in general and of particular universities and colleges in the various elites, but one can relate them to the other social indicators. By so doing one can show the extent to which an increasingly professional society has extended the social area from which the elites are recruited and also the way in which

the richer and more influential social classes have used the higher education system and the principle of certification to maintain, though not completely, their hold on the key decision-making positions of industrial and post-industrial society.

First, however, let us notice that higher education is the most ambiguous of social indicators. The rise of a professional society means two contradictory trends, one inegalitarian, the other egalitarian. 1) Until recently many of the richest and most prestigious people, though they might go to Oxford or Cambridge as a sort of finishing school for gentlemen, saw no absolute necessity for higher education, and a third of the newly-created peers, half the great landowners, over half the chairmen of the great corporations and nearly two-thirds of the millionaires were non-graduates. Even many of the professional men normally qualified by training on the job and passing the examinations of their own institutes, notably most of the accountants, architects, solicitors and civil and mechanical engineers. Thus the inegalitarian trend has been for more of the business men and landowners to choose to go to university, and especially Oxford and Cambridge, as one more symbol of wealth and privilege and an additional reinforcement of their claim to high status, and at the same time for most of the leading professions to become increasingly graduate ones, as their training has become more formalized and drawn into the orbit of the universities (and, latterly, the polytechnics). This is especially true of the accountants, architects, solicitors and engineers, who have also been rising in general social status, as measured by father's social class and own secondary education.

2) On the other hand, the expansion of the universities and of higher education generally has opened the door to young men and women of talent, both from the manual working class and still more from the lower middle class,

who have used higher education to compete with their social superiors and climb to the top. Paradoxically, this was until recently easier to do via Oxford and Cambridge than via the other universities and colleges. Until the universal availability of student grants for all students admitted to British universities about 1960 it was easier, surprisingly, for bright boys and girls from less wealthy families to get to Oxford or Cambridge than to other universities, since the two ancient universities, or rather their colleges, had far more scholarships to offer. The scholarships, it is true, were more accessible to those educated in classics and other traditional subjects at the independent schools, but the few who won them from the state grammar schools often achieved better university degrees than their fellows, and sometimes better jobs especially in the civil service or university teaching. Mere entrance to Oxford and Cambridge is now intensely competitive, and favours the most intelligent from all social classes, but far more those from the private than from the state schools. Thus the pre-eminence of Oxford and Cambridge in the British higher education system both reinforces the hold of the rich and privileged on the elites and provides an avenue by which the exceptionally able from the less affluent classes can reach the top.

This double trend is visible in varying proportions in all the major elites. Cabinets of all parties have always (since 1880) contained a majority of graduates, even though some of the most eminent statesmen such as Disraeli, Lloyd George, Churchill, Ramsay MacDonald and the present prime minister, James Callaghan, have been non-graduates. The Conservatives, representing wealth and rank at all stages, have naturally had a predominance of Oxbridge graduates, 67% in the 1880-99 cohort, falling to 57% in 1940-59, and rising again to 71% in the 1960s. Yet the other indicators show that the predominant type of Oxbridge graduate has been changing: there was a steady

decline in upper-class and major public school products, though they still retained a majority, and a steeper decline in landowners' sons and old Etonians and Harrovians. In short, Conservative cabinets may still be made up of Oxbridge graduates but there are fewer great landowners and rich business men and far more scholarship winners from the minor public and state grammar schools, like Edward Heath, Anthony Barber and Margaret Thatcher. The upper class and the major public schools still have majorities, however, of 63% and 56%. To that extent they still dominate the elite.

The Liberals began with more Oxbridge graduates than the Tories, 72% in 1880-99, but declined to 40% by the inter-war period, when they totally lost their upper-class majority, their landowners disappeared, and major public school boys shrank to a negligible 13%. In other words, they lost the rich and powerful without gaining the new meritocrats, which sufficiently explains their collapse. It seems that an elite which loses the confidence of the traditional upper class without finding an adequate replacement is doomed.

The Labour cabinets, on the other hand, which were always an amalgam of middle-class intellectuals and trade unionists, and inherited some wealthy Liberal and Tory lords like Haldane and Parmoor, steadily increased their proportions of university graduates, from 43% between the Wars to 66% in the 1960s, while Oxbridge graduates rose from 21% to 46%. These were nearly all meritocrats like Harold Wilson, Roy Jenkins, Anthony Crosland and Denis Healey, most of them from non-affluent backgrounds. (In 1976 the contest for the leadership of the Labour Party and the office of Prime Minister lay between four Oxford graduates, Anthony Crosland, Michael Foot, Denis Healey and Roy Jenkins, and a non-graduate, James Callaghan. Even the non-graduate winner, significantly, was an honorary Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford.) Yet even the Labour cabinets have maintained a steady 28-29% of upper class

members, like Clement Attlee and Anthony Wedgwood Benn, and the major public school element has actually increased from 11% to 24%. In politics the change from the old landed and business elite to the new professional meritocracy has been striking in both governing parties, but the upper class and the privately educated still retain far more than their 3% and 4.5% shares of the population.

Ever since competitive entrance examinations were introduced in 1870 the highest ranks of the Civil Service have been proverbially dominated by Oxford and Cambridge graduates. Only promotion of talented officials from the lower grades, increasingly graduates of other universities, has prevented them from sweeping the board. Amongst the heads of departments, graduates have increased from 60% in 1880-99 to 90% in the 1960s, and Oxbridge graduates from 50% to 67%. Yet here again the character of the Oxbridge graduates has changed: upper-class top civil servants have declined from 70% to 39%, and major public school products from 71% to 25%. According to R.K. Kelsall, the effect of the Fulton Committee's reforms since 1968 has been to increase the percentage of public school and Oxbridge entrants, and unless there is a corresponding increase of promotions to redress the balance the Service heads may become even more Oxbridge-dominated.[36] Meanwhile, the irony remains that the apex of the government's bureaucracy is increasingly typified by middle-class meritocrats much like the newer politicians whom they serve and manipulate. Nevertheless, the upper class (3%) retain thirteen times their "natural" share (39%), and the privately educated (4.5%) nearly fourteen times (62%).

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[36] R.K. Kelsall, "Recruitment to the higher civil service: how has the pattern changed?", in Stanworth and Giddens, op. cit., commenting on the Report of the Fulton Committee on The Civil Service, 1966-68 and its effects on recruitment.

Great landowners, as one would expect, go to Oxford, Cambridge or a military academy if they seek higher education at all; only the odd one in the last two cohorts has been to another university, and that London. That is not surprising, since 98% or more have always been upper-class, and 90% - 95% from major public schools, indeed three quarters or more from one school alone, Eton. Yet even here the percentage of graduates has increased from 46% to 62%. The most notable findings about the great landowners, however, are 1) that they and their sons have declined in almost every elite which they once dominated, from the cabinet through the civil service to the newly created peers; and 2) that nevertheless, contrary to popular opinion and despite high taxation and death duties, they have remained, next to the millionaires with whom they overlap, the richest of the elites.

The chairmen of the 200 largest corporations have changed during this century from a predominantly non-graduate elite (57% in 1900-19) to a predominantly graduate one (59% in the 1960s), and Oxbridge graduates amongst them have increased from 29% to 47%. These figures, however, disguise important differences between industries: traditional firms like banks, breweries, distilleries, shipping and, until they were nationalized in 1947, railways have had more graduate and especially Oxbridge chairmen; newer ones, like motor manufacturing, oil, chemicals, chain stores, newspapers and entertainment companies, many founded in this century by self-made men, had fewer. But all, except for a few of the self-made men like Lord Marks of Marks and Spencer, Lord Trent of Boots and Lord Grade of Thames Television, were drawn overwhelmingly from the upper class (80%—72%) and the private schools (90% - 80%), and nearly half from the major public schools (45% - 48%). Managerialism, in the narrower sense of management of industry (not society)

by career managers rather than self-made or inherited asset owners, has certainly made its appearance, but the career managers who reach the top (with some well-known exceptions like Lord Stokes of British Leyland, Lord Kearton of Courtaulds, and Lord O'Brien of the Bank of England) seem to be mainly public school products and frequently Oxbridge graduates. Since the career managers succeed by being better profit makers than the family owners, and as their probate valuations show they often amass considerable private wealth in the process, the professionalization of industry is certainly compatible with the survival of private capitalism.

It is equally compatible with the state ownership of industry. The chairmen and deputy chairmen of the nationalized industries are one of the most variegated of all the elites, since they are selected by different governments from successful members of other elites, especially ex-cabinet ministers, big business men from private enterprise, top civil servants, trade union leaders and career managers from the nationalized industries themselves. They range from rich bankers, shipowners and chemical manufacturers like Sir Gerald d'Erlanger, Sir Giles Guthrie and Lord Melchett to ex-Labour cabinet ministers from trade union backgrounds like Lord Robens and Sir Richard Marsh. Although selected on a deliberately meritocratic basis, less than half have been graduates and only about a quarter from Oxbridge. Yet even here nearly half have come from the upper class, and over half from the private schools. In no elite are the two contrary pulls of traditional wealth and the new professionalism more equally balanced.

Millionaires are not strictly an elite at all in the sense of occupying a defined position at the head of a particular hierarchy, but simply those who died leaving more than a million pounds. The great majority, however, were born rich, chiefly in business or landed families, and the self-made millionaires were until recently a shrinking minority, though there has been

a revival amongst those dying in the 1960s. Most of them were too busy making money to waste time on higher education, and the few who did, about a quarter to a third, mostly went to Oxford or Cambridge (19% - 34%), because they were rich enough already. Yet most came from the upper class (70% - 79%) and were educated at private schools (63% - 79%). The main qualification for becoming a millionaire was to have a father who left at least £100,000; the only qualification for the few women millionaires (45 out of 609) was to be the daughter or widow of a millionaire, and all except one widow, the daughter of a clergyman, were born in the upper class. Higher education was totally irrelevant to recruitment to this elite, and may indeed have been a handicap, especially to the self-made.

The professions, represented by the presidents of the seven leading professional institutions plus the senior judges, university vice-chancellors and headmasters of the nine Clarendon schools, are for obvious reasons leading examples of professional society. Where they were not already required, like the doctors, headmasters and most vice-chancellors, to have university degrees, the rest, the accountants, architects, civil and mechanical engineers and solicitors, increasingly acquired them, and although they were drawn from a wide range of universities and colleges there was an increasing tendency to acquire them from Oxford and Cambridge (23% - 48%). The senior judges, university vice-chancellors and Clarendon headmasters were overwhelmingly recruited from Oxbridge: from 52% rising to 83% of the judges, most of the non-Oxbridge and all but one of the Oxbridge vice-chancellors (Lord Ashby, a London graduate, the well-known writer on higher education) and every one of the Clarendon headmasters. Nothing could more graphically illustrate the predominance of Oxbridge or, at first sight, of the meritocratic principle. Yet before the 1960s an <u>increasing</u> proportion of the leading professional men were recruited from the upper class and from the private

schools, with the sole exception of the vice-chancellors, a majority of whom have come since 1900 from the middle and working classes and even by the 1960s from the state and direct grant schools.

Journalism has the reputation of being a meritocratic profession open to any bright young man or woman with a flare for news and a creative way with words. If so, flare and creativity must be concentrated in the universities since most national editors have been graduates, and mainly Oxbridge graduates at that. Moreover, although more have come from the middle than from the upper class, about two-thirds have been educated at private (increasingly at minor public) schools. Meritocracy in journalism is probably increasing, but the merit comes disproportionately from the middle ranges of society.

Governors of the B.B.C. and members of the Independent Television Authority are the ultimate controlling bodies of the public and private broadcasting systems, and chosen by the government to represent the interests of the viewing public. They are drawn from what are known in Whitehall as the "great and good", public-spirited persons of some eminence in their fields but no political ambition, including academics, ex-civil servants, senior military officers, business men, trade unionists and representatives of women's organizations. In practice they reflect the composition of the other elites from which they are drawn: they are mostly graduates, and predominantly Oxbridge. Nevertheless, they are decreasingly upper-class and major public school - educated, and increasingly middle-class and educated at minor public and state schools, showing that both the old class and the new professional principles are in operation here as elsewhere.

The "great and good" in the most general sense are rewarded in British society with royal grants of honours, the highest of which is of course the

peerage, which carries with it membership of the upper house of parliament. No other elite has undergone so profound a change since 1880. Once the preserve of the great landowners (however they acquired their land), they were joined from about 1880 by rich bankers, brewers, industrialists and business men generally. Since the First World War, however, and still more since the Life Peerages Act of 1958, which also admitted women to the Lords, land and capital have become secondary to other sources of prestige, and the newly created peers have increasingly reflected the other elites, including ex-cabinet ministers, trade unionists, professional men and women of all kinds, and even academics, authors, actors, artists and sporting personalities. Nor surprisingly, there has been a steep decline in upper-class and privately educated creations (though still a slight majority of each). On the other hand, graduates have maintained their roughly two-thirds majority throughout, while Oxbridge graduates have remained a majority of the graduates, with 45% of all new peers at the beginning and 43% at the end. Nothing could more clearly show the adaptability of the two ancient universities to the changing nature of the elites in modern British society.

The only elite which shows almost no element of higher education in general or of Oxbridge in particular is the trade union leadership. Only three trade union leaders have been graduates and only one has been to Oxbridge, and that was Sir George Woodcock, General Secretary of the T.U.C., who took a first-class degree at Oxford as a mature student. With the exception of the few white-collar trade unions, such as the National Association of Local Government Officers which has included three solicitors amongst its presidents, trade union officials in Britain have been recruited almost entirely from the manual workers and the state-educated. There are signs that this may be changing and that a few graduate officials are being recruited, especially from mature students who have first worked as manual

workers. Perhaps in the future the expansion of secondary and higher education will deprive the manual unions of members able enough to take over the leadership, but that time is not yet. Some of the cleverest men in industry and politics have risen from the shop floor to the top of this elite, which has become a sort of fourth estate of the realm, able to make and unmake governments.

The higher education of the major elites in British society since 1880 illustrates both the rise of a professional society and the adaptation to it of the old dominant upper class. On the one hand, there has been a vast expansion of higher education and a widening of the social area of recruitment of the elites, though much more within the upper and middle, privately educated, non-manual classes than below them. On the other, with the possible exception of the old landed class - only possibly, since so many landowners have transformed themselves into business men - the upper and middle classes have adapted themselves remarkably well to the demands of professional society for training and certification. They have done this chiefly by maintaining and even increasing their hold on the more prestigious institutions of the higher education system, and above all on Oxford and Cambridge. This is all the more remarkable because, in the British system of higher education, all universities are ostensibly equal, and governments in recent years have not only tried to make them more equal but have tried to extend that equality to the state colleges, especially the polytechnics, as well. Yet both the demands of the new professional society and the manipulation of it by the old dominant classes require the higher education system to be, in certain respects at least, unequal. The struggle between these contrary but equally inegalitarian forces on the one side and the egalitarian pressure of the government on the other I will deal with in my next lecture, on the control of British higher education.

III

THE CONTROL OF BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION

If all societies get the education, and particularly the higher education, they deserve, it is because of the social and political forces in conflict within them. As in a parallelogram of forces in mechanics, the resolution of the conflict in some sort of equilibrium, stable or unstable, will usually be a compromise in a direction unintended by any of the parties concerned. Since the forces are many and complex and vary in balance and momentum between societies, however similar in other respects such as the transition from pre-industrial through industrial to post-industrial society, the compromise is likely to be unique. Official government policy towards higher education and the formal institutional structure are only two of the forces in operation and, contrary to much educational opinion, not necessarily the most powerful, since government policies and formal institutions are but the expressions and embodiments of ideas and values held, sometimes unconsciously, by powerful groups within the society, and they may indeed be frustrated by other powerful groups such as the already entrenched and competing elites.

The control of British higher education, therefore, as one would expect of a system which has grown piecemeal from many different roots but with increasing financial support and consequent "guidance" by the state, is a particularly complex compromise. It is easy enough to describe the formal structure of control; it is much more difficult to determine who really controls the system, in what proportions, and to what ends. The parties contending for control are: 1) the academics, who claim primacy because of their professional expertise in what is to be studied and taught, often divided

between the professors who were once the arbiters of knowledge in their field and the non-professorial staff who were once their exploited assistants; 2) the university bureaucrats, who in the British context have never claimed to be more than servants of the academics; 3) the students, who ask "Whose university?" and answer "The customer's, who is always right and ought to be able to choose what and how he is to learn and even how he is to be assessed"; 4) the potential employers, who argue that, especially in a country fighting for its economic survival, research and learning divorced from material production and exports are a luxury we can ill afford; 5) the lay founders and benefactors of the universities and their successors, who once played the central role in their governance, and still play a large if somewhat different part; 6) the voting taxpayers who want the best for their own children but increasingly resent paying the ever-expanding costs of higher education for other people's children - especially since most taxpayers are now working-class and comparatively poor and most university students middle-class and comparatively affluent; 7) the local authorities, both the elected councillors and the permanent officials, who have a large stake in higher education both through their direct management of the non-university colleges and their financing (with central government assistance) of most of the students attending the universities; and, finally, the central government itself, both 8) the politicians who overtly set the policy and 9) the civil servants who claim merely to carry it out but covertly often determine it.

The struggle is further complicated by the fact that it is two systems, not one: the so-called "autonomous sector" comprising the universities which are in theory independent, non-profit making corporations chartered by the Crown through the Privy Council (though sometimes reorganized like Oxford, Cambridge, London, Newcastle and the old Scottish universities by Act of

Parliament); and the so-called "public sector" which consists of the polytechnics and other state colleges owned and managed (except for a small number of Church colleges of education for teachers) by the local education authorities. Even this, the so-called "binary system" christened but not invented by the late Anthony Crosland when Secretary of State for Education in 1965,[37] is not what it seems: the irony is that the autonomous sector is now more directly financed, controlled and audited by the central government, not merely through the University Grants Committee but through the Comptroller and Auditor-General to Parliament, than the state colleges. The latter are not strictly state colleges at all and are insulated to some extent from direct central government interference by the local education authorities (the county councils) and the block grant system of finance which allocates central government money to the local authorities to spend as they see fit, between education, roads, police and any other service, provided they meet their statutory obligations. The polytechnics, indeed, are becoming semi-independent, under Governing Bodies which resemble university councils and include academic staff, students and non-government lay members as well as local authority representatives - a trend which has been encouraged by the central government but is deeply resented by most local authorities.

But before we turn to the struggle for control itself, what is the struggle about? At bottom, it is about the kind of society we are trying to maintain or create, in so far as higher education helps to maintain or

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37 In a speech at Woolwich Technical College, later to become Thames Polytechnic, in 1965; further developed in his speech on the new policy for Polytechnics at the University of Lancaster, 20 January 1967 (reprinted in Pratt and Burgess, op. cit., p. 212).

change it. In a rising professional society like Britain in which an entrenched and powerful class structure seeks to use the higher education system to maintain and even increase the inequality of status and rewards, the struggle is bound to be between on the one side the inegalitarians new and old, the old upper class and the new meritocrats, and on the other the egalitarians, the radical politicians, the educational reformers and, most surprising of all, the meritocratic civil servants of the D.E.S.

That is why the control of British higher education must be seen in the context of societal change as a whole. The rise of professional society has complicated the age-old struggle between privileged wealth and under-privileged poverty, which could be seen in simple terms of reaction versus progress, and raised questions about which way progress now lies, towards equality of opportunity which may encourage the talented to create the new industries and services which will produce jobs and higher living standards for all, but at the risk of perpetuating unfairness, or towards equal rewards for all, whatever their contribution to the common good and national survival, but at the risk of discouraging creative talent of benefit to all. Both directions are equally attractive and equally good, at least to some people, but they are incompatible. The conflict is a genuine moral and political dilemma in which a rational, humane and fair-minded person might be equally at home on either side.

Unfortunately, though most of the protagonists are humane and, within their own terms, fair-minded, some of them are not as rational as one would like and do not see the problem clearly enough or realize the consequences of their own policies. This applies particularly to some of the politicians and civil servants, who have been misled by false distinctions such as the

binary system and false analogies between, say, the polytechnics (and other state colleges) and the comprehensive schools at the secondary level. (The comprehensives are genuinely for the whole 11 - 18 age group; the polytechnics and other local authority colleges provide full-time advanced courses for roughly the same small percentage each of the 18 - 22 age group (7%+) as the universities.) The result is that policies of increased state control have been pursued in the name of a spurious egalitarianism which have, if anything, increased the inequalities of the system. Ironically, as we shall see, the latest act of state power, the raising of university and other degree fees more than seven-fold and ten-fold, from about £70 in 1974-5 by stages to £500 for undergraduates (£650 for overseas students) and £750 (£850) for post-graduates in 1977-8, may backfire and actually <u>diminish</u> state control over the system and <u>increase</u> inequality between institutions, which is one of the main instruments of inequality between the social classes.

Until comparatively recently - some would say as recently as 1963 when the financing of the universities through that uniquely British institution, the University Grants Committee, was transferred from the Treasury to the Department of Education and Science - the control of British higher education was chiefly an internal question of the balance of power within the universities. Until 1964 when the Council for National Academic Awards was set up to validate degree courses in the public sector, the universities had a monopoly of the award of degrees. University government followed one of two models, ancient and modern. The older universities, Oxford and Cambridge and until the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1858 the four Scottish universities, were self-governing guilds of scholars, controlled in the English case by the masters and fellows of the colleges and in the Scottish by the very hierarchical professors. It is doubtful whether the academics

were originally so independent since the medieval universities, though founded on the guild (universitas) principle were really Church foundations, under clerical discipline and under the close supervision of the local bishop. Nevertheless, by the 19th century they were so independent and, it was thought, so scandalously inadequate to the needs of the new industrial society that they were reorganized by Acts of Parliament. Oxford and Cambridge were reformed by Acts of 1854, 1856 and 1877 which opened them to non-Anglicans and increased the powers of the university and the professors over against the colleges but left untouched the principle of academic control, on a wide, democratic basis which included all the teaching fellows and, in Cambridge, all the resident M.A.s. The Scottish universities were reformed by Acts of 1858 and 1889 which introduced the new principle of lay control then in vogue in the newer universities.[38]

The newer civic universities, beginning with London founded as a joint-stock company in 1826 and chartered as a federal university ten years later, followed the second model, of control by the lay founders and benefactors, including in some cases representatives of the city authorities. Although royal chartered corporations, they were closely modelled on the joint-stock companies so typical of the industrial capitalist age. The court, the large, ultimate governing body principally composed of lay founders, and their nominees, other donors and the city fathers, which met once or twice a year to hear a report, elect the council and determine general policy, was like the annual meeting of shareholders, and just as easily manipulated. The

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[38] On the development of university government cf. G.C. Moodie and R.B. Eustace, Power and Authority in British Universities, London, 1974, esp. chap. 2.

See also H. Perkin, Innovation in Higher Education: New Universities in the United Kingdom, Paris: O.E.C.D., 1969, chap. 5; and Colin Flood Page and Mary Yates, eds., Power and Authority in Higher Education, Society for Research into Higher Education at the University of Surrey, Guildford, 1976.

real executive governing body, the council, was the equivalent of the board of directors and, apart from the vice-chancellor as chief executive or managing director, consisted of prominent business men and local politicians (much like the American board of trustees). Some charters even granted ex officio seats on the council to donors of large sums of money and representatives of certain local authorities. The senate, consisting almost entirely of the vice-chancellor and the professors, was the supreme academic body, but since the council appointed the professors and allocated the resources, derived until 1919 almost entirely from endowments and students' fees, that body was the arbiter of what and how much of it was studied and taught. (In Scotland the names were different but the functions and principles the same). Until late in the last century the academics, apart from the vice-chancellor, had little power and were treated as the employees and servants of the lay controllers.

Since most of the English civic university professors were derived from academically democratic Oxbridge, and the Scottish ones resented their loss of power to the laity, they began to agitate for academic representation on court and council. The turning point was the foundation of the federal Victoria University of Manchester (later joined by Liverpool and Sheffield) in 1880, which pioneered the modern system of academic, then meaning professorial, representation on court and council, but with the principle of lay majorities preserved. As time went by, academic minorities grew larger, and since the academics were full-time professionals and always attended while the laymen were amateurs and had less to lose, the academics, almost exclusively the professors, tended to get their own way. Indeed, they found an ally in the state: as state subsidies, which began in a small way (£15,000) in 1889 and were channelled from 1919 through the University Grants

Committee, a body consisting almost entirely of eminent academics, increased and local lay benefactions decreased as a proportion of university income, the state tended to regard the professors as the proper custodians of the ideals and purposes of higher education. From the founding of the U.G.C. and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in 1919 down to the university dominated Robbins Committee and the founding of the New Universities in the 1960s was the golden age of academic, and outside Oxbridge professorial, control of the universities.

The non-professorial staff, who began outside Oxbridge as a small minority of ill-paid assistants to the professors, became a majority in the early 1900s, about two-thirds to three-quarters between the Wars, and seven-eighths or more of the profession after the War, also began to demand a share in the government of their universities. One early sign was the agitation against their low pay and status which culminated in the foundation of the Association of University Teachers in 1919, the same year as the U.G.C. and the C.V.C.P.[39] Token representation on the court and council began with the new Manchester charter in 1904, but effective representation on the real governing bodies, council and senate, came very slowly. Reserved seats for the non-professorial staff on senate began at Reading in 1926 and Durham in 1937, and they began to find their way onto councils mainly by election from the court. By the early 1960s the general principle of representation on senate and council (subject to a lay majority on the latter body) was admitted, encouraged by the U.G.C. and by the Privy Council's model charter of 1963, which recommended the election of up to a third of the Senate by the non-professors.[40] Nevertheless, I well remember the long-drawn out battle in Manchester in 1960-64 for the election of non-professors to senate - 10

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39 Perkin, Key Profession, chap. 2.

40 Moodie and Eustace, op. cit., pp. 35, 41; Perkin, New Universities, chap. 5

representatives in a body of over 200.

No sooner had the non-professors' claims been met than the students began their agitation for representation. When Manchester set up its Charter Revision Committee in 1964 with three laymen, three professors and three non-professors under the chairmanship of the V.C., no-one, least of all the students, thought of student representation on governing bodies, beyond token representation on the court. By the time it finally achieved a new charter, after two abortive reports, in 1973, student power had become a live issue. This was obviously the result of the world-wide "rise of the student estate" which began in Berkeley in 1964 and hit the British universities and the new polytechnics in the late 1960s. By 1969 students had gained staff-student committees (whose decisions were usually ratified) at council or senate level at 46 out of 70 universities and constituent colleges, and at a few, such as Manchester, Lancaster and Sussex, direct representation on senate and/or council as well. In practically all the new polytechnics they had gained representation by 1972 on the Governing Body (the equivalent of council) and at most on the Academic Board (the equivalent of senate).[41] Since then they have been extending their representation on lesser bodies, committees of all kinds, boards of faculties, schools, departments and the like.

Like the non-professorial staff, they have found, to their surprise, that the source and centre of university power still eludes their grasp. There is no one organ of university government in which power resides: it is dispersed between a host of committees on which, perhaps, a few "good

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[41] Based on an enquiry which I conducted for a paper on "Student Participation in Higher Education in the United Kingdom", delivered at an International Symposium in Brussels in June 1972, and published in Flemish in Politica, University of Leuven, Belgium, IV, 1972.

committee men", often but not always senior professors and always (if he is not a nonentity) the vice-chancellor, know how to get their way by political skill and force of personality. The university officials (other than the vice-chancellor who is the chief administrator as well as the academic head) exercise a certain influence, by the traditional bureaucratic devices of framing the agenda and writing the minutes of governing bodies and committees, or very occasionally by their own political skill and force or personality; but in British universities, unlike American and unlike too the British state colleges, the administrator has never been a major force in institutional government. The British university tradition is for the academics, and especially the professors, to dominate the administration - at a considerable cost to themselves in time spent sitting on committees and in logrolling between meetings.

Thus by the 1960s, despite rearguard actions from a few lay governors, infiltration by the non-professors and challenges from the students backed by sit-ins and strikes, the internal government of universities appeared to be firmly under the control of the academics, still led by the full professors. At the national level, academic power seemed at its height: the 1960s saw a doubling of the number of universities and a more than doubling of student numbers; the academic-dominated U.G.C. distributed record grants to the universities; and the six research councils, also composed of eminent academics, distributed record amounts of money for research, mainly to university academics. Yet that, paradoxically, created the very trap into which the universities fell and by which they lost both their monopoly of degree-based higher education and ultimately control over their own affairs.

It was the growth of state expenditure on universities, both absolutely

and relative to their other sources of income, which gave the state, in the shape of the politicians and the D.E.S. officials, the leverage to break the universities' monopoly and to exert ever-increasing state control over their affairs. U.G.C. expenditure (recurrent and capital) on universities grew from £692,000 in 1919, over £2 million in 1938 and about £10 million in 1946, to £129 million in 1962, £285 million in 1972, and nearly £500 million in 1975. At the same time, the proportion of university income provided by the state rose from about one-third between the Wars to about three-quarters in the early 1970s (and 90% of building and equipment costs), while income from student fees shrank from about 30% between the Wars to about 7% in the early 1970s.[42] With such exponential growth of costs borne by the taxpayer, higher education became a highly political issue, which blew hot in the 1960s and then icy cold in the 1970s. In the euphoria of the early 1960s associated with the Robbins expansion, money was poured into higher education, both universities and public sector, as an investment in economic growth; in the economic crisis of the 1970s and the disillusionment with higher education as a panacea for all the country's ills - a disillusionment only partly economic but aggravated by academic claims to special treatment and successive waves of student unrest - the money is being cut back and diverted to "more deserving" areas of education, such as pre-school provision and the 16 - 19 age group. In a single decade higher education has been transformed from the spoilt child of public expenditure to the ugly duckling whom everybody, and especially the politicians and bureaucrats, loves to hate.

The increase in state pressure took two forms: a diversion of resources to the public sector which was fondly thought to be more amenable to political

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[42] Based on U.G.C. Reports for the appropriate quinquennia.

control and more responsive to society's and industry's needs; and an increase in direct government control over the universities themselves. The first began almost immediately after the Robbins Report of 1963 with the complete reversal of its philosophy of a hierarchy of higher education with the universities at the top and the state colleges gradually raising themselves in the traditional manner to university status. It was heralded by the then Labour Secretary of State for Education, the late Anthony Crosland, in his now famous Woolwich speech in 1965 in which he proclaimed the binary policy: a sort of academic apartheid between the autonomous and public sectors of higher education aimed at their separate but equal development. The Robbins Report would be used to defeat itself: the recommendation that the state colleges should be allowed to award their own degrees, validated by the C.N.A.A., instead of the external degrees of London University which had been the traditional route to university status, was to be used to create a competing degree-awarding state sector in which the colleges would be prevented from seeking university autonomy. The main though not the sole instrument of this policy, announced in 1966,[43] would be the polytechnic, a state college equal in all respects to a university but still under direct state, or rather local authority, control. Thirty such polytechnics were designated in England and Wales between 1968 and 1972, with about 160,000 students by 1974, of whom 77,000 full-timers and 40,000 part-timers were on degree or other advanced courses, compared with about 200,000 in the English and Welsh universities. The Conservative White Paper of 1972, Education: A Framework for Expansion (Cmnd. 5174), continued the same policy, and envisaged a higher education system by 1981 of 750,000 students, equally divided between the universities and the public

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[43] In the D.E.S. White Paper A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges of Higher Education in the Public Sector, London (H.M.S.O.: Cmnd. 3006), 1966.

sector. (Owing to the economic crisis and the decline in the trend of schoolchildren to qualify for higher education the target has since been cut back to 560,000). The final blow to university superiority was the Houghton Report on teachers' salaries in December 1974 which set out to raise polytechnic lecturers' salaries to parity with university teachers', but because the latter were caught by the new incomes policy actually left them considerably higher.[44]

Mr. Crosland has since admitted (1971) that in 1965 he did not fully understand the ramifications of the binary policy but yielded to the desire of his civil servants "to get the policy on record as soon as possible", though he still thought the policy was basically right.[45] In fact, the policy was not that of the politicians, who had not thought it through, but of the D.E.S. officials, who were determined either to bring the universities to heel or create a system of higher education under their own control or, better still, both. They had been trying to sell it to ministers of both parties for years, until they found one gullible enough to buy it.[46]

The trouble was that it was the wrong solution to the wrong problem, and had the opposite effects to those intended. At a time when student demand - and even employers' demand as measured by the starting salaries they paid - was swinging away from science and engineering, the D.E.S. chose to expand a group of state colleges chiefly devoted to the applied sciences. The polytechnics found they could not attract many more such students and immediately began to diversify into humanities and social science degree courses. At a time when there was a need for more and better provision for

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44 D.E.S., Houghton Committee of Inquiry into Teachers' Pay, Report, 1974.

45 Maurice Kogan, The Politics of Education, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1977, p. 193-94.

46 Based on personal observation and conversations with politicians and civil servants.

part-time and sandwich-course students for sub-degree technicians and skilled workers, the polytechnics began to drop their part-time and sub-degree work and concentrate on full-time degree courses. And at a time when there was a need for greater provision for working-class and other deprived students, the polytechnics began to attract increasing proportions of middle-class students, for whom a degree was inseparable from the idea of higher education. In short, although the policy set out to prevent the polytechnics from becoming universities, they became a classic case of what Pratt and Burgess have called "academic drift", and began to turn themselves into universities in all but name.[47]

They were not even the cheap university substitutes the D.E.S. intended: salaries were higher, they were top-heavy with deputy directors, permanent deans and other non-teaching administrators, and their staff-student ratios were more favourable than those of the universities, 1: 6.9 as against 1: 8.5. There can have been no more unfortunate mistake in educational policy than the creation of the polytechnics, and no clearer example of other social forces, including student demand and academic self-interest, defeating government policy. The fight goes on, however, and the local authorities, notably the Inner London Education Authority, are trying to reassert their majority control on the Governing Bodies of the polytechnics.[48] The Government has also set up a committee under Mr. Gordon Oakes, Minister of State for Higher Education, on the management of the public sector of higher education, including its alleged lack of accountability to the Department of Education and Science.[49]

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47 Pratt and Burgess, op. cit.; see also T. Burgess's brief abstract on "Higher Education and the State: Reflections on the Binary Policy" in Page and Yates, op. cit.

48 Cf. "Authorities' bid to tighten grip threatens poly autonomy", Times Higher Education Supplement, 18 February 1977.

49 T.H.E.S., 11 and 25 February 1977

Increased state control of the universities began about the same time and by the same people. The D.E.S. bureaucrats in 1963 achieved their long-standing aim of transferring control of the U.G.C. and the financing of the universities from the Treasury to themselves. Since then the U.G.C. has ceased to be a neutral or pro-academic buffer between the government and the universities and has become a sub-ministry without the benefit of a separate cabinet minister to speak for it, an instrument of state control with a bureaucracy of over 100, which lays down mandatory criteria for everything from non-academic salaries to building costs per square foot. Since 1967 it has begun to issue "letters of guidance" both to the universities in general and to each individual university, laying out what it believes to be the most useful developments for them to pursue. In other words, the universities are still free to spend their block grants as they like, but if they spend them "unwisely" they will not get the money next time round. This effective veto on "unwise" developments is backed up by the new accountability of the universities, also since 1967, through the Comptroller and Auditor-General to the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons. This completely by-passes the U.G.C., since the official accounting officer, who must therefore be allowed direct access to individual universities' account books, is the Permanent Secretary of the D.E.S.[50]

Direct state control is now exercised in the most naked manner. When university fees were first doubled in 1975 the rise was announced by the Minister of State, Mr. Reg Prentice, in Parliament without consulting the universities. When they were raised again to £500 for undergraduates and £750 for postgraduates as from 1977-78, it was announced without consultation

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50 Cf. Perkin, Key Profession, pp. 224-26.

by the last Secretary of State, Mr. Fred Mulley, and implemented by the present one, Mrs. Shirley Williams. The old process of quinquennial financing, by which the U.G.C. consulted the universities concerning their needs and then negotiated with the government a settlement for the next five years with built-in compensation for inflation, has broken down, and the D.E.S. in the name of the economic crisis now makes settlements on a year-to-year basis, makes arbitrary cuts in the grant of 2 - 4% in real terms, imposes "cash limits" on expenditure (i.e. with no guarantee of supplementation for inflation), and in 1977-78 has cut out all capital expenditure on new buildings other than one major building for a new medical school.

It must be admitted that the universities and their professional association (now a trade union), the A.U.T., have helped to bring this state of affairs upon themselves. They have asked for specific guidance on a wide range of matters from overseas students' fees to building standards. Above all they have asked for, indeed demanded, central control of academic salaries and pensions. The A.U.T., indeed, was founded in 1919 in pursuit of a demand for equal treatment of the various grades of university teacher with regard to salaries and pensions. Since then they have actively pursued direct negotiating rights not merely with the U.G.C. but directly with the government. I plead guilty to helping to negotiate the new negotiating machinery in 1970 with the outgoing Labour minister, Mr. Gerry Fowler, and the incoming Conservative Secretary of State, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. The result has been that university teachers' salaries are directly controlled not by the supposedly autonomous universities or the U.G.C. but by the D.E.S. and the Treasury.

This is very much in line with the egalitarian trend of government policy under both governing parties, and of the D.E.S. officials behind it.

All universities are equal, as are the polytechnics; all degrees are equal, their standards guaranteed by the system, common to both sectors, of external examiners; and all academics, within their various grades, are equal, whether they teach in a university ancient or modern or a polytechnic or other state college. At least, that is what the politicians and the D.E.S. bureaucrats say, but British society says differently. All universities and state colleges are not equal. They are arranged in a pecking order which is universally acknowledged by academics, students and their parents, and employers. Despite equality of salaries, staff gravitate to the high prestige universities, notably Oxford, Cambridge and London, even though the cost of living is higher there and their real standard of living will fall. Despite inequality of salaries, higher in the polytechnics at least for junior staff, there has been no great exodus from the autonomous to the public sector. Students strive eagerly to get into the more prestigious universities, despite higher (hidden, college) fees at Oxford and Cambridge and despite additional entrance examinations which often require an extra year at school. The varying A-level entrance requirements in the same subject at different universities accurately reflect their differential standing in the eyes of potential students. The polytechnics invariably come, sadly, at the bottom of all the pecking orders. Employers, from the civil service itself through the B.B.C. and the nationalized industries to private business, almost invariably prefer graduates from the more prestigious universities, which in turn reinforces the determination of students to get there. And since, as we saw in the higher education of British elites, the most affluent, the privately educated and the most talented have the first choice of institution, the inequalities of wealth, status and, to a less but increasing extent, innate academic ability, defeat

the officially enforced equality of the system.

The egalitarian policies of the state have themselves reinforced the inequalities of the system. The universal provision of student grants, which in theory enables any applicant to go to any institution, merely enables the purchasers of better, more university-oriented education, especially if they can afford to wait an extra year before entry, to go to the most prestigious universities which, as we have seen, are increasingly the main rung on the ladder to elite status. The very existence of other, supposedly "equal" universities and polytechnics means that the rich and influential, along with the most talented from other classes, can monopolize Oxford and Cambridge with an easy conscience. Most ironical of all, the new high fee system is the most inegalitarian device yet. On the old parental means test the rich paid fees plus maintenance (and everyone, however rich, could claim a £50 grant); as from 1 October 1977 home students have their fees paid for them, however rich their parents. At the post-graduate level only the very rich will be able to support themselves without a D.E.S. or Research Council Award. The British higher education system already subsidized the rich; now it will subsidize them even more.

Yet the new fee structure, imposed by the state as the last of a long series of measures to increase its control over the universities, may turn out to be self-defeating. It will raise the proportion of university income derived from student fees from about 10% to 23%. Further threatened increases may raise it even more. That will in fact give the universities a bigger source of independent income, derived indeed from the state, but less directly under its control, since it will be politically impossible to deny accepted students the grants they are entitled to. The more successful universities will, in fact, be able to increase their income by attracting

more students, and that in turn will increase the inequalities between institutions. I find the prospect not without its humour. To see a bureaucrat hoist with his own petard is like watching a good performance of Malvolio in Twelfth Night.

The control of British higher education, as I have said, is easy to describe but difficult to understand in terms of the realities of power. The resources of the state are great, but the resourcefulness of society is greater. The elites in British society are at their old game, perfectly legal and by their lights moral, of course, of manipulating the system in their own favour, while allowing enough success to the talented from all classes to inject fresh blood where it is needed and to keep them from being dangerously discontented. They display an elegant adaptability which served them well in the transition from pre-industrial to industrial society; it is still serving them well in the transition from industrial to professional society.

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